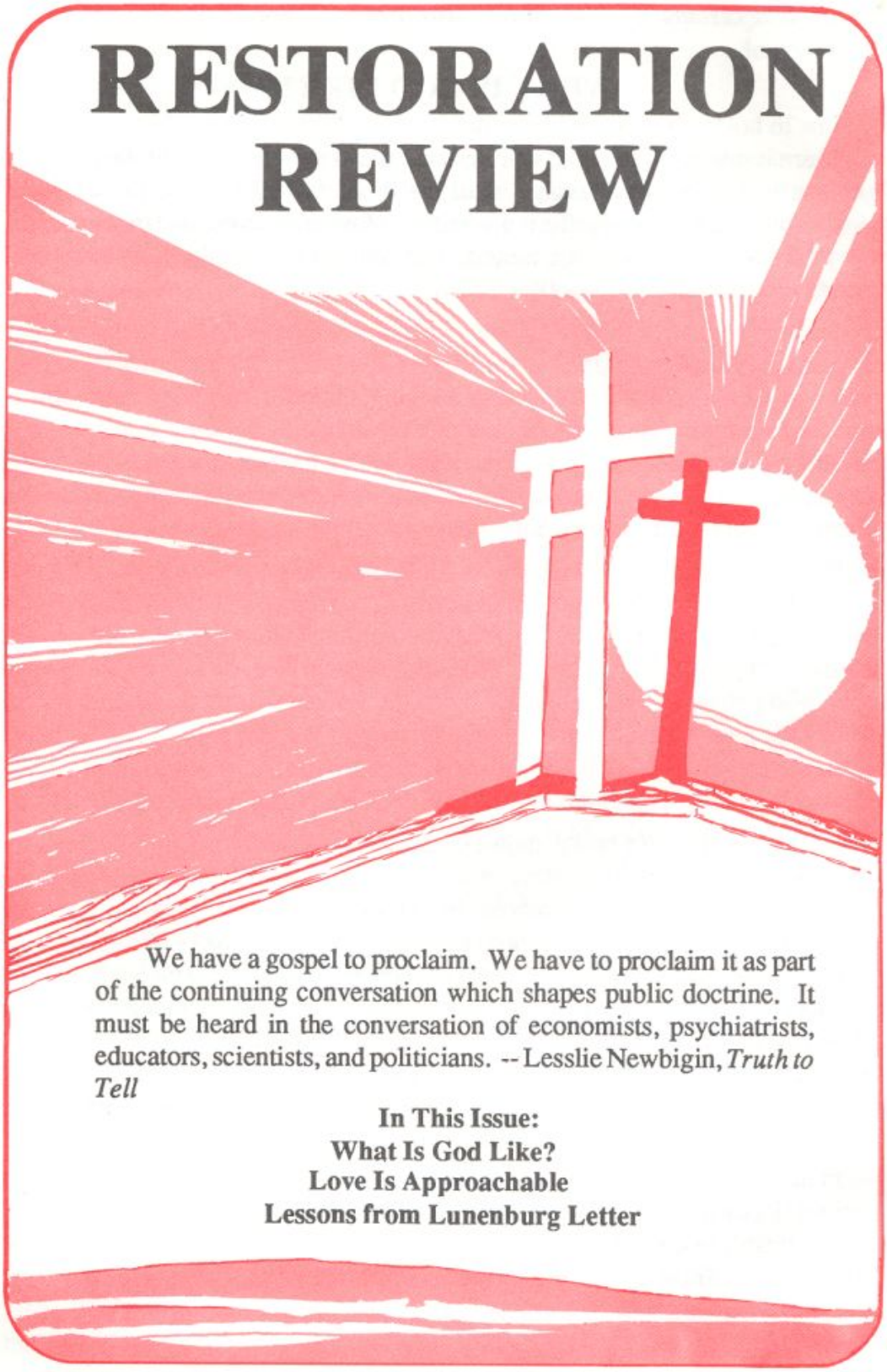
RESTORATION REVIEW



We have a gospel to proclaim. We have to proclaim it as part of the continuing conversation which shapes public doctrine. It must be heard in the conversation of economists, psychiatrists, educators, scientists, and politicians. -- Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . No. 10

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

There is one passage in the Old Testament that says more about the nature of God than most any other passage in all the Bible: “The Lord, the Lord God, is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty” (Ex. 34:6-7).

That the authors of the OT caught this vision of God is evident in the fact that this passage is quoted ten times in other parts of the OT. The Hebrews were slow coming to such a lofty view of God as a loving, merciful, forgiving being full of goodness and truth. That a lower view of God competed with this higher view is seen in what the same passage goes on to say, which tends to mar the higher view: “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

Here in America we have some states that are passing laws holding parents accountable for the ill deeds of their children. It is a reasonable point of view. But our citizenry would not tolerate the idea of punishing children for the sins of their parents. And yet the God of the OT, at certain stages in Hebrew history, is depicted as one who perpetrates such injustice by taking vengeance on the children for the sins of their parents, even to the fourth generation. We can only conclude, in the light of our greater revelation, that the real God of heaven that we know in the person of Jesus Christ is not that kind of God. He does not punish innocent people!

But the problem of a brutal, unjust God goes deeper than that. It is difficult for the Christian to see how the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ would will to kill the firstborn of every Egyptian household (Ex. 11:4-6), or how He would stalk Moses, seeking to kill him, only to be appeased when the bloody foreskin of Moses’ son was cast before him (Ex. 4:24-16). It also appears out of character that God would want the innocent women and children of Israel’s enemies murdered, including “infant and nursing child”, as in the instance of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3). In this tribal, primitive view God is further depicted as “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8) and as bartering with Abraham, who like a good Jew bargains with God over the number it will take to spare Sodom from destruction (Gen. 18:23-32).

In the New Testament we are exposed to the God who so loves the world that He gives His own son to die for our sins, and in the Cross we see the suffering love of God. It isn't in the person of Christ that God becomes that kind of God, but in Christ the God of heaven is revealing the kind of God He has always been. God was the same loving God in the OT that He was at the Cross. It was not yet the time for Him to reveal Himself as such, even if now and again in the OT we have brief glimpses of the God who will be fully revealed in Christ. The passage we referred to at the outset gets close to the God of the Cross: He is gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness.

In some of the prophets we get more than a glimpse of this God of suffering love. Hosea was such a prophet, and that may be why he was quoted again and again by our Lord in the New Testament. There was one great truth in Hosea, all in a single line, that Jesus urged the Pharisees to "Go and learn what this means" (Mt. 9:13). He quotes the same line again in Mt. 12:7, indicating that if the Pharisees knew only that one great truth theirs would be a different religion. The one line was "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." That single line, taken from Hosea 6:6, tells us in capsule form what God is like. It is not only one of the great lines in the OT but of all the Bible. Mercy is what God wants!

And what a truth it is! It is a good example of how one simple but profound truth, stated in a few words, can change a person's life. The heart of almost all religious systems is sacrifice. Modern Christianity is no exception. We presume that what God wants is our submission to this regulation and to that ordinance. And so we have our rituals and ceremonies, doing this and doing that, whether genuflections, lighting candles, prayers, readings, and all the rest. And all such things may well have their place. But this is not really what God wants. He wants us to show mercy, for in this way we are like our Creator, who is the God of mercy. While there is a place for sacrifice in God's order, the sacrifice must come from a life full of mercy. Another prophet gave us another great one-liner, which says the same thing: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

That one line from the OT tells us what God is like. He desires mercy! What a liberating truth! If that is what God loves and desires, is that not what we should tender Him, a life committed to showing mercy?

The prophet Hosea does not give us the litany of gloom and doom of a wicked people found in some other prophetic literature. This prophet sounds a new note of tender compassion and forgiveness of a wayward people. The prophet had a disastrous marriage, with his wife becoming a harlot. While the prophet threatened his wife for her unfaithfulness, he could not keep from loving her. He forgave her and took her back. God is like

that, Hosea is saying, in that He keeps on forgiving His people who “play the harlot” in their idolatry.

Hosea gives us a touching scene of what God is like in 2:19-20: “I will betroth you to me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.” Here Israel is depicted as the Bride of God, and God is the husband of an erring wife. In 2:16 the prophet even says that the people were no longer to call God their Master but “My Husband.” Since Hosea was a favorite part of Scripture to Jesus, he must have absorbed these words and made them part of his own view of what God is like. This was passed on to the church, which in the NT is referred to as the Bride of Christ. The church has long sung that great line, “From heaven he came and sought her to be His holy bride.” It is noteworthy that this concept goes back to an eighth-century prophet of Israel.

Hosea goes on to change his metaphor and picture God as a loving father who cannot give up His son (into captivity) even when for the sake of discipline He has to do so. The father’s tenderness and compassion is as gripping as anywhere in the Bible. He loved Israel when he was but a child and called him out of Egypt (11:1). He taught him to walk, taking him by His arms, and He healed him (11:2). He drew him with gentle cords and with hands of love, like a child being held close by cord and halter (11:4).

What the prophet says next bears on the incredible, for he pictures God as the caring father who “stooped and fed” His hungry child. The great God of heaven, whom the people called the Most fligh, *stoops* to help His people who are nonetheless unfaithful. Even when they sacrifice to false gods, He stoops down to nourish them!

We have the God of suffering love that we see in the Cross when Hosea goes on to describe God as loving his people so much that He can’t bear to punish them even when He must. “How can I give you up, how can I turn you over?,” God says in His trauma, “My heart churns within Me, My sympathy is stirred” (11:6)

Over and again God is depicted in the OT as having consummate love for His people, as much so as in the NT, apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ himself, who came as the very personification of God’s love. But in the OT God is depicted as a broken hearted father (Is. 1:2), as a consoling mother (Is. 66:13), as an attentive shepherd (Ps. 23). There are still other rich metaphors that tell what God is like: a rock (Dt. 34:2), a protector (Gen. 31:49), a help (Ps. 115:9), a shade (Ps. 121:5), a fountain (Jer. 2:13), dew (Hos. 14:5), light (Ps. 27:1), shield (Gen 15:1), king (Ps. 44:4).

There is clearly a moral progression in Israel's understanding of God. It is not, of course, that God changed and became more moral and just (even merciful) through the centuries. The Hebrews were first a nomadic tribe with very primitive mores. God had to deal with them in their own context. It is understandable that they would come to view "the God of our fathers" as in competition with the gods of their neighbors and enemies. Other nations had a priesthood and offered sacrifices to their gods, so the Hebrews had a priesthood and offered sacrifices to Yahweh. They practiced circumcision and the Hebrews practiced circumcision. They had washings (baptism) the Hebrews had washings.

But in all these things God was revealing His true nature, so that in time a higher view of God developed. It is a long way from a God who strikes down Uzzah for a false move and the God of the prophet Hosea who bends down from heaven to show mercy to a people equally as sinful as Uzzah. God has always been the same loving, forgiving God that we see in the suffering Christ on the Cross. But a people must first go through kindergarten and the grades before they are ready for college. If Moses saw the back of God, when God placed His hands over his eyes as He passed before Him (Ex 33:22-23), Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple "high and lifted. up" (Is. 6:1). To Moses God was like a friend, to Isaiah He was "the King, the Lord of hosts."

Alexander Campbell liked to illustrate this progression and the attending dispensations in terms of ever-increasing light. First there was only starlight, the age of the patriarchs, but still there was enough light that the likes of Enoch could walk with God. With more revelation came the Mosaic dispensation, which Campbell likened to moonlight, during which time God schools His people for greater things. This age was also the age of the prophets through whom God reveals Himself as never before, as in Isaiah who tells of greater light yet to come.

At the close of the Mosaic and prophetic age was the voice of Malachi who tells of the coming harbinger in the spirit of Elijah who will prepare the way for the Lord. That prophet, standing between the dispensations, speaks of "The Sun of Righteous-ness will rise with healing in its wings, and they shall go forth like calves let out of the stall, happy and free." So moonlight gives way to twilight in the coming of John the Baptist who tells of the approaching kingdom of God. And at last the sunlight age in the coming of him who is the light of the world, "the Sun of Righteousness."

So, that is what God is like, *Light,* but before there can be the full-orbed glory of the sun there must be only the flickering of distant stars. Moses and the prophets brought more light, moon light. With John, who staggered in the presence of One whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and untie, came twilight—"The kingdom of God is at hand." The Sun of Righteousness was rising in the distant eastern hills.

Adam heard God walking in the garden. Jacob wrestled with Him all night. Elijah heard him in a still small voice. The Israelites saw him in a pillar of fire. Isaiah saw His glory in the temple. But at last the light penetrated the darkness as never before and the darkness could not apprehend it. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” (Jn. 1:14) was the testimony that pointed to the full measure of light.

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, is what God is like, and that light began to shine, first dimly and then with increasing luminosity, in the Old Testament.—*the Editor*

All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ—*David Livingstone*

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LESSONS FROM CAMPBELL’S LUNENBURG LETTER

Here of late I have had occasion to study once more Alexander Campbell’s response to the woman in Lunenburg, Va. who wrote and asked him if only those who are baptized by immersion are Christians. Campbell’s reply became controversial in his own time, and all these years it has remained one of the most famous documents of our heritage. This time around I examined it with greater depth and am persuaded that it has much to say to us today, not so much about baptism itself, however important that is, but about principles of religion in general.

The woman was disturbed by Campbell’s frequent references to “Christians among the sects,” and she wondered how this could be since Campbell himself had championed the position that people become Christians by believing in Christ, repenting of their sins, and being buried by baptism into Christ, and this was not generally what the sects taught. She asked Campbell to define a Christian point-blank.

The editor responded by giving a definition that is now well-known among our people: “But who is a Christian? I answer, Everyone that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will.” He went on to say that he could not make immersion absolutely essential to a Christian.

This disturbed many of his followers then and continues to do so today, even though he made it clear that if one understands that immersion is according to the will of God he must submit to it to become a Christian. No one can despise an ordinance of God and be a Christian. Yet he said he could not make anyone duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion. One who has a submissive heart before God will obey a command in the sense in which he understands it. He emphasized the importance of habitual or general obedience, not loyalty to one duty.

What gives the letter special significance are the principles that Campbell draws on in reaching his conclusions about baptism. It is these that I want to call to your attention. You will find them liberating.

1. *Mistakes of the mind and errors of the heart are greatly different.*

This important truth is often neglected. Campbell says errors of mind and heart are poles apart. An angel may mistake the meaning of a commandment, but since it is not an error of the heart he will obey in the sense in which he understands it. He notes that John Newton and John Bunyan had very different views on baptism, but both had good hearts and obeyed according to their understanding. There are others who have depraved hearts whose errors are wilful. Errors of the heart are therefore much more serious than errors in understanding, which are unwillful.

2. *Ignorance is always a crime when it is voluntary. but innocent when it is involuntary.*

It is wilful neglect of the means of knowing what is commanded, Campbell says, that indicates a corrupt heart. He concedes that there must be many who are guilty of wilful ignorance. But still there are many who cannot even read and others who are poorly educated who have difficulty understanding aright, and there are. many others who innocently follow their teachers. There are those who desire to know the whole will of God who mistake the meaning of this or that commandment. Campbell says he would sin against his own convictions to say that such ones must perish forever.

3. *There are perfect Christians and imperfect Christians, but both are Christians.*

That the apostle Paul would urge the Corinthians to be perfect in understanding (1 Cor. 14:20) infers that some or most were not. In 1 Cor 2:6 he referred to speaking wisdom “among those who are perfect,” which implies a distinction between perfect and imperfect believers. He also distinguished between the carnal and the spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1) and between the weak and the strong (Rom. 14:1). Jesus in his parables taught that even among the honest and good hearts some bring forth thirty fold while others bring forth a hundred fold. Some of God’s children are retarded, others are highly gifted. Some have a defective

faith, some a defective obedience, which might be a mistaken view of baptism. But still they are Christians if their hearts are set upon following Christ the best they know how. Campbell notes that it is an easy thing for the supposedly “strong” or “perfect” Christians to pass judgment upon the weak and immature. Many a good man has been mistaken, Campbell says.

4. *It is the image of Christ that th£ Christian looks for and loves*.

Campbell insists that this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known. We should not substitute obedience to one command for universal or general obedience, he says. If he saw one who had been only sprinkled who was more spiritually-minded and more generally conformed to the likeness of Christ than one duly immersed, he would be inclined to favor him or her the most, he ventured.

Campbell concluded his letter to his Lunenburg reader by observing that because one might be excused from exact obedience to a command through honest misunderstanding does not excuse one who understands what his duty is. One who tries to use the involuntary mistake of another to justify his own wilful neglect of any commandment docs not have the Spirit of Christ.

The reformer received a lot of negative response to the Lunenburg letter, which reflected a more liberal view of baptism in general and religion in general. He noted that all the negative reaction proved that there were not many Campbellites after all! What they saw was a compromise of the doctrine of baptism by immersion, while Campbell was trying to avoid what he called ultraism. Too, Campbell could not bring himself to conclude that until his people came along there was no Church of Christ upon earth, no Christians, no kingdom of God, and that the promise that the gates of hell would never prevail against the church had failed. ‘’Therefore, there are Christians among the sects,” he told the sister in Lunenburg.

The furor over this letter lived on. It identified a strong reactionary element within the Movement that Campbell was hardly aware of. It was the beginning of the exclusivism that eventually divided the Movement, not as long as Campbell lived, but it began to bear its destructive fruit soon after his death.

But it is the principles in this letter that matter most of all. If we could implement them into our thinking today they would go far in liberating us from some of our self-deprivation.—*the Editor*

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We Must Know That We Are Saved...

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (10)

If the Church of Christ is to be saved its members must begin to believe that they are saved. You will see that I am using "saved" in different senses. If the Church of Christ is to have a redemptive role and an effective ministry in our changing world, then its members must have a victorious faith and a joyous assurance that they are a redeemed people, saved by God's grace. I am fearful that this is not the case with the majority of our people. We do not *know* that we are saved. We hope we are. We trust that we are. We work at it. We answer the question, "Are you saved?, with a qualified yes at best, such as "If I am faithful. . ."

Seriously, it is a sad state of affairs. Try it for yourself. Ask a few of our people if they are saved. You should be sincere about it and not be putting them on. You will find an alarming degree of uncertainty, and this from members of longstanding, people who are delightful Christians in so many ways. It is simply that they have no real assurance of their salvation. It is a tragedy of no small proportion. And I know where they are coming from, for I was once as uncertain as they. The by-product of such uncertainty is a lack of joy. One thing Church of Christ people aren't, in spite of many noble qualities, is a joyous people. We have little joy because we have little assurance.

We don't talk like people who are assured of their salvation. We don't sing that way. We don't pray that way. That is why our singing is unexciting, our prayers dull, and our services generally boring. Take a look at our Sunday morning service at most any of our churches. Is it a funeral? Where is the spontaneity? Where is the joyous excitement of being a Christian? Who would seek solace from a troubled world among folk who go at their religion with a yawn and a sigh? Let's face it, for the most part we are lukewarm.

Someone has said a gathering of Christians for worship should be something like the locker room of the winners of a Super Bowl game. That may be an overstatement, for there is a place for subdued quietness in our assemblies. But in that quietness there should be a contagious sense of joy, not unlike an athlete sitting quietly before being crowned for winning the race. That says it, we are winners, all the time we are winners in Christ, and we should feel it and act it. We certainly shouldn't have the demeanor of the *losing* team after a Super Bowl game. Yet many of our people behave just that way, like losers. They

are scared to live and afraid to die. Are you saved, are you bound for glory? “I hope so. I’m working at it,” they say.

But one can’t hope that he is saved. Either one is saved or he isn’t. One can’t hope for what he already has. The object of hope is always in the future. The believer’s hope is in eternal life in heaven.

There is no simple solution to this problem. We can’t turn ourselves on as one does a faucet. We can’t rev ourselves up by some kind of self-analysis. It is not a matter of calling out the cheerleaders. Nor can we solve it by resorting to what caused the problem to start with—by trying harder! If we are to be saved as a church, we must come to see that we have a fundamental problem. And what is that? Hold on to your seat, for it is a shocker: *We don’t really believe in the grace of God.*

While we deny it, we really believe in works-salvation. We are saved by being baptized (exactly the right way, mind you!), by taking Communion regularly (it has to be the right day!), and by studying our Bibles (the doctrine has to be exactly right!) To be saved we have to be “faithful” and “right” about all the things that make us good members. No wonder we are nervous when asked if we are saved! Who can measure up to the standard that we set for each other? We keep trying harder, but we are weary of trying. Occasionally we are on a spiritual high, for we have touched all the bases, but we are often down. We scale six rungs of the ladder of perfection one day, and slide down seven rungs the next.

So, to be saved we must seek a fundamental change in our faith. We must quit trying so hard and start surrendering more. We must slough off our self-reliance and our “Do-it-yourself’ religion and rely more on God’s faithfulness. We must start believing in the gospel of the grace of God, the basis of which is that salvation is His free gift to us. There is no work that we can perform to attain it. There is no way for us to buy it. We can’t be good enough to deserve it. There is no power that can. wrest it. It is a gift, a free gift, that is ours only because of God’s philanthropy. In short we must come to see what has been in holy Scripture all along: “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8).

This reliance upon the grace of God rather than ourselves must occur one by one among our people. That is the only way it can reach the congregational level. We must “save ourselves” first, by suing for God’s mercy, and in that way we can save our sisters and brothers in the Church of Christ. They must “see the grace of God” (Acts 11:23) in us. We may begin by doing what few Church of Christ folk have ever done, by inviting Jesus into our hearts. Let us make the promise of Rev. 3:20 our very own: “Behold, I stand at the

door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

This was written to a church, not to the sinners out in the world, though it would apply to them also. But here Jesus is standing at the door of his own church seeking entrance. The minister doesn't have to open the door, or the elders, or the mission committee. You and I arc invited to open the door. Here we have the power for change in the Church of Christ. If you want to effect the change, start by getting on your knees and—even if you have never done it before—invite Jesus into your heart. Ask him as he enters to take away all your self-righteousness, your pride and conceit, your resentment and bitterness. Ask him to make his home in your heart. Tell him that you will take him to work with you, to play, to church. Crown him as the Lord of your life, and then praise and thank God for His goodness and mercy. As Jesus lives in our hearts the fruit of love, joy, and peace will grow and abound. Now you will be able to forgive people that you could not forgive before, for you are now drawing upon his goodness rather than your own. That will be your joy!

Along with inviting Jesus into our hearts, which can be done again and again since he can and will move deeper and deeper into us, we should pray the sinner's prayer (Lk. 18:13), "God, be merciful to me a sinner." It is the prayer that impressed Jesus. The lowly publican was justified or made righteous by that prayer, or the faith that it expressed. It should be our prayer too, for we also are sinners in need of God' s grace, always, over and over. We have been too much like the Pharisee who in the same story prayed "God, I thank you that I am not like other men," which was the prayer of an insecure believer. Assurance comes only in approaching the throne of God empty-handed and with a contrite heart.

This is the way that we can know that we arc saved, fully assured of our redemption in Christ. We can be as sure as Paul was when he wrote in 2 Tim. 1:9, "He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began," and the apostle goes on in verse 12 to say "I know and I am fully persuaded." We don't have to equivocate. We can be sure, for we are relying upon Him "who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

This in no way compromises the necessity of good works in the life of the believer. There is a context in which we can say as Jas. 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." But no matter how great our works may be we are to be like Paul: "not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philip.

3:9). In Tit. 3:5 he insists that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." It is in that connection that the apostle refers to baptism as "the washing of regeneration." This shows that baptism is not our "work of righteousness" but the work of God's grace upon us.

Included in Alexander Campbell's view of baptism was that it was a pardon-assuring and pardon-certifying act rather than a pardon-procuring act. That is, we do not "gain" or "procure" salvation by being baptized. It is a passive act. God is doing something to us, it is God's "washing of generation" upon us, an act of His grace. In baptism we have the assurance of pardon and the remission of sins. I can know I am a Christian and saved because "I have been to the river and I have been baptized." Campbell used the illustration of a highway sign. One can know he has crossed into the state of Ohio because the sign says so. Baptism is the "sign" indicating that we are pardoned. This is the force of 1 Pet. 3:21 where baptism is described as "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

Martin Luther viewed baptism in this light. When the pope was calling him the likes of "that drunken priest in Germany," Luther retorted with, "The pope can't talk about me like that, for I have been baptized just as he has." Luther was a good Campbellite! He had assurance of his salvation because he had been baptized. Lest the modem church forget, baptism is an ordinance of God. And what is its purpose? Part of its purpose is to give us something to submit to so that we can know that we have entered into a new state and a new relationship.

If any people should be vigorously confident of their salvation it is Church of Christ folk. And why? Because they have been baptized into Christ. Not baptism in and of itself but all that it signifies, a new life in Christ and a behavior commensurate to that.

Once we see that the only righteousness we can have is Christ's righteousness within us we will have the kind of assurance that is evident in the letter of 1 John. That little apostolic love letter has a way of linking the Christian's assurance with a life of love, as in 1 Jn. 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

We know because we love! When that great truth becomes our own we will be saved as a people. Let it be so!—*the Editor*

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LOVE IS APPROACHABLE

In Paul's great love hymn in 1 Cor. 13 it may not say in so many words that love is approachable, but it is inferred. If love looks for a way of being constructive, does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance, and keeps no score of wrongs, as Phillips renders part of the apostle's description, then love is approachable. Or if love is patient, kind, and endures all things, as the KJV has it, then love is approachable.

Being approachable is so eminently Christian that it is a virtue we should all covet. Jesus bore this virtue perfectly. We should make him our model and thus avoid those traits that turn people off. Jesus is the one person who could have prayed the prayer of the Pharisee in Lk. 18, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men," but he didn't pray it. As perfectly good as Jesus was he didn't think of himself as good. He hardly thought of himself at all, so absorbed he was in the problems of others. He was approachable to children, to women, to the outcasts of society, even to despised lepers. He was never too busy for people. He always had time for them, however busy he was. The common people heard him gladly because they sensed the radiance of his openness. Jesus was even harborous to those who did him wrong. Being approachable! It is the one trait that makes for a beautiful life.

You will notice that I described Jesus as being harborous. It befits him, for he was a refuge or a harbor for those who sailed stormy seas. Tyndale's 16th century translation rendered Rom. 12:13 ("Practice hospitality") as "Be ye of an harborous disposition." That one really grabs me. I recall the story of a blind girl who was taken to a Rose Garden party at the White House to help launch a fund-raising project. When the First Lady approached, she excitedly said, "Mother, am I smiling?" I feel that way about this great idea of being harborous. In the face of a troubled world pleading for warmth, acceptance, and understanding, I find myself asking, "Lord, am I approachable?" Oh, if we can but be "soul shelter" to some dreary soul! Small boats are in danger all about us. Are they willing to pull in to our harbor.

We must avoid those things that make us unapproachable, such as a judgmental, sectarian spirit. I recently heard a leading minister of our more "conservative" churches berate those who were promoting "the new hermeneutics" as hypocrites. He hardly made himself approachable to those he sought to correct. There are those, however, who can "speak the truth in love" with such force as to correct the unruly and yet maintain a forbearing spirit. I am persuaded that being approachable is partly a matter of faith.

Self-pride and self-righteousness also make us unapproachable. A person with an exaggerated sense of his own importance does not make for a welcome harbor. One who is full of self will not have listening ears or an open heart to someone who is hurting. If we

are truly approachable we will not be selective as to who sails into our harbor. If we are open only to those we can use to promote our own interests, we are not only unapproachable but unauthentic as well. We are probably much closer to Jesus when we are with the rejects and misfits of society than when we are with "those who are somewhat." We learn early on, even in school, to avoid those who are not accepted by the crowd. This is why when we draw closer to God we are more harborous to those who need us most.

Hardly anything promotes unity among believers as much as being approachable. When we have an aura about us that reads "Keep Out" or "Enter At Your Own Risk," there is going to be little fellowship. But if one is easy to talk to and is willing to make herself vulnerable to others the sharing of a common life in Christ is possible. Vulnerability and approachability are stepping stones to "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The one who can sincerely confess "I goofed" and "I am sorry" (and perhaps even "I love you") is prepared to be a peacemaker among divided brethren. But not so with the brother, however talented, who is never wrong about anything and who never changes his mind. The fellow who appears to be saying, "We Browns never stoop," is a harbor none of us chooses to enter. This is why some kids can't approach their own parents.

How approachable are you? Are you fortressed in by the pursuit of your own goals? Are you secluded in your own small world of selfish pride? Are you imprisoned in time frames of petty, shallow pursuits, with little time for anyone else?

These questions may be hard to answer. We need help from outside ourselves. Our answer is that we become more open, more approachable, more harborous the more we become like Jesus. We have our answer when we pause and hear him say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The one who had time for children is the one who provides us "access" (Rom. 5:2)—What a beautiful word!—*access* to a God who otherwise "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16). Now *that* is being approachable!

Besides all this, life is more fun when we open ourselves to the world around us. We are happier when we are harborous. It is worth trying. You might start by paying more attention to little children in the neighborhood or at church. Bend down to a little one and tell he!" how pretty her dress is, or ask the little boy about his new cap. Learn to talk to kids, especially those that are ignored. Or peel off from the highway traffic and stop at a nursing home. Ask the attendant to select someone for you to visit, someone who has little or no visitors. During your visit think of yourself as a harbor, and that you are opening up your heart to this lonely, frightened soul. As you become more harborous you become more like Jesus Christ, and that makes life a joyous, exciting experience.—*the Editor*

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WE CAN ACCEPT WITHOUT APPROVING

Randall Massie

"What's a person to do? You can't turn your back on your own flesh and blood." His voice quivered with emotion as deep disappointment and love flowed in the same breath.

Perhaps you've heard these discomforting words from a friend. Some of you may experientially understand this parent's pain. As I listened my mind traveled back to Jerusalem, to the temple courtyard. There sat Jesus, quietly teaching his disciples. But he was rudely interrupted as a woman, caught in adultery, was heartlessly thrust before him. Her pious accusers skeptically inquired of Jesus what to do with this one so stained with sin. Jesus answered, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to stone her."

After the last accuser walked away, Jesus tenderly spoke those precious words of hope, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." Divine acceptance and redemptive disapproval were intermingled in our Lord's response.

I looked again at my friend. I realized that he was demonstrating the heart of Jesus. He understood that acceptance wasn't approval. He was struggling to accept his child as Christ had accepted him (Ro. 15:7). He refused to turn his back on his own flesh and blood.

Although He had every right to, God didn't turn His back on us. Though He disapproved of our sin, and still does, He made possible the bridge of reconciliation through Jesus. He died for us when we were still in a state of sin. All those who respond in faith to the Son of God become sons of God themselves. They become family, our Lord's own Body.

How pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity, and encourage family members to think for themselves and develop their own unique talents. Yet our dysfunctions often lead to disunity. Family will not usually turn their backs on family over drug abuse, but they sometimes do if one abuses "the silence of Scripture" and considers instrumental music a matter of opinion. They accept their daughters who become pregnant out of wedlock but may excommunicate their daughters who adopt a different view of the millennium. They excuse their sons who are alcoholics but often turn their backs on their sons who are filled with the Holy Spirit rather than with wine.

Could this be what Jesus had in mind when He spoke of those who would strain gnats and swallow camels? It appears that many have confused acceptance and approval. It seems that some have gone so far as to believe that one's conduct is less important than one's conscience, so long as the conscience conforms to the thinking of those in authority.

Please understand that I'm not advocating that we turn our backs on those who fall into moral error. I am saying that we should quit turning our backs on those whom we perceive to have fallen into mental error. If Jesus can accept without approving, so can we who follow in His steps.—*Church of Christ at Walnut Street, Box 465, Howard. Pa. 16841*

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WITH UNVEILED FACES AND WITHOUT A MIRROR

Dorothy Koone

One of the delights of Bible study is the glimpses we get of the glorious unity of the whole of truth, such as the Holy Spirit working through a diversity of authors and weaving various strands of truth into a beautiful tapestry of God's faithfulness and love. I recently had such a glimpse when reading 2 Cor. 3:18, this time in the New King James Version, which reads:

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In connection with this passage I thought of 1 Cor 13:12 where Paul also says, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face." Even though our faces are unveiled, according to this passage we see the glory of the Lord in the mirror only dimly, at least until we have finished being transformed, and then "face to face."

This picture is broadened in 1 John 3:2 where another apostle tells us *when* our transformation into Christ's image will be complete: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And when is this? When we see him face to face. We can thus see the parallels between 1 Cor. 13:11-12 and 1 John 3:2.

We often sing that line "Farther along we'll know all about it, farther along we'll understand why." We also say that the "then" in 1 Cor. 13:10, "When that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away," refers to the time when the last of

the New Testament writers laid down their pen and the holy Scriptures were complete. We make this point in order to prove that tongues and prophecy have ceased.

But can we have it both ways? If this passage means that we will understand everything "then," that is when we finish this life and graduate to the next, it cannot also mean that tongues and prophecies ceased "then," meaning when the New Testament was completed.

However inconsistent we may be and whatever we believe will happen "farther along," the great truth remains that we are even now in this world being transformed into Christ's image "from glory to glory." It also remains true that one day, not only with unveiled faces but directly and without a mirror, we will see Christ as he really is.

The apostle John, who once saw the Lord transfigured, goes on to say in 1 John 3:3: "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as he is pure."—*1230 Cordell, Denton, TX 76201*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Ouida now has professional help in caring for Mother Pitts, whose condition has deteriorated to the point that the doctor applied for Medicare assistance. A nurse's aid comes five days a week to help with routine chores, especially bathing. Three days a week a physical therapist gives her special exercises. A nurse comes frequently to check on the more technical things. Ouida still has lots to do, especially preparing her meals and feeding her, and I still help in moving her about several times a day, but it is encouraging to have professional help. It boosts our morale.

All this school term Ouida and I have taken off on Wednesday evenings to have dinner at the Church of Christ here in Denton where we are members, which serves upwards of 200 people, a family affair, and does it very well. Study classes follow for all ages, one of which I have been teaching on the Restoration Movement, with good interest. Ouida attends the class gladly. She may feel that time is running out for many more such experiences together. She has to feed her mother late those nights, but we are making it work and it is lots of fun. I go so many places without her that it is a ball to have her along, and she makes a good student. She loves to hear me talk about Raccoon John Smith!

Our readers have begun to ask me about other papers they might take once we close down this time next year. I may be calling your attention to a few that you might want to read. You don't have to wait to subscribe to *The Christian Appeal*, which is one of the best edited and one of the most irenic papers published among Churches of Christ. It usually follows a particular theme each month, the current issue being on "Weathering the Storms." It emanates from the non-Sunday School churches and promotes unity among all believers. The sub rate is $6 per annum and the address is 2310 Anna St., Amarillo, TX. 79106.

Larry James and Bill Swetmon are both longtime and highly respected ministers of Churches of Christ in the Dallas area. An area newspaper carried this notice about them conducting a seminar this fall: "Both men come from acappella traditions, but they will present historical and biblical information in support of instrumental music in worship. The seminar begins at 4 P.M. in the sanctuary of First Christian Church, 1501 Ave. H. (Plano, TX.). The public is invited." These brethren, one of whom still ministers to the Richardson East Church of Christ in Dallas, are not, as I understand it, advocating that Churches of Christ adopt instrumental music, but only that it is biblically and historically permissible if a church prefers to use it. Here we have Church of Christ ministers defending instrumental music in a Christian Church! Our world is changing, isn't it? The same two men took. the position that instrumental music is a matter of opinion in a forum at Freed-Hardeman University in October. Opposite them were two brethren who contended that it is a matter of faith.

I recently listened to a tape of a presentation by Bill Banowsky given at the Highland Oaks Church of Christ in Dallas a few years back. It was an excellent study of the subject of unity. He made a reference to his occasional visits to other churches, such as preaching at a Methodist church. He said he had received more criticism for these visits to other churches than all the other things he had ever done, and added that he had done a lot of untoward things! Even so, Bill has his blessings to count, for today many people in the Church of Christ, maybe most people, would not criticize him for associating with other believers and other churches. Too, Bill is consistent with what our pioneers in the Restoration Movement believed when he moves beyond our exclusivism, if that means anything. Those who criticize such things need to tell us how we can claim to be a unity movement when we have no meaningful contact with other believers.

The Heritage Resource Center in Bethany, W.V. is seeking to restore the grounds of Alexander Campbell's old home to the way it was in his day, including gardens, orchards, barns, tenant houses, mills, sheep folds, arbors, and privies. By way of infrared aerial pictures, old photographs, written materials, and some digging they believe this can be done, at least on paper. This may make it possible for you, when you visit Bethany, to see

the Campbell homestead and grounds as it was 150 years ago. The homestead itself has been renovated.

Sunday, a Roman Catholic publication, tells its readers how ordinary Catholics can win souls. One suggestion they make will interest those in Churches of Christ: “Present the Catholic vision of life honestly and clearly, but don’t engage in petty argumentation just to ‘win points.’ The purpose of discussing’ religious questions with a potential convert is not to show how smart you are or the Church is, but to welcome him or her into the Faith community.” It goes on to say that one can win an argument but lose the convert. It advises not to try to disprove such objections as “Catholics worship Mary,” but to concede that it is indeed wrong to worship Mary, and point out that Catholics only do what Jesus himself did, *honor* Mary. The article also urges Catholics to get excited over their faith, which has a way of being contagious.

The bulletin from Oak Hill Chapel in St. Louis, Carl Ketcherside’s old congregation, had Carl’s picture in a recent issue, announcing the publication of his autobiography. The same issue told how the congregation now uses instrumental music, along with a brief history of the organ and how it was made. It is ironic that the church Carl started and nurtured through its struggling years now practices what he always opposed. But I doubt if it would be a big deal to Carl if it did not disturb the peace of the church. I understand that a few did leave for conscience sake, but the church will go on and work to the glory of God. But with an organ it will in no wise any longer be considered a “Church of Christ.”

You will hardly find a mail-out that says more in fewer words than J. James Albert’s *California Letter,* which is but a single page. It emanates from the one-cup, non-classes Churches of Christ, and does it ever expose the sectarian spirit, and in every issue. Such as, in the October issue: “We are motivated by the spirit of sectarianism. Instead of saying we are trying to be Christians only, we say and act as if we are the only Christians. Instead of love propelling us into service for others we arc stopped in our tracks by fear. Instead of meeting the challenges and solving the problems of our day by preaching the gospel and providing leadership our emphasis is upon maintaining the status quo and proselyting our brethren to our sect.” If you want on his mailing address (no cost), the address is Box 811, Corcoran, Ca. 93212.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

Concerning Restoration

A recent bulletin editorial from the pen of Charles Hodge reminded me that the church is not in the antique business. People talk about the good old days a lot (usually we had no air-conditioning and barely could afford to pay our preachers). We embellish "back when" and make it better than it ever was. Frankly, I don't have any desire to go back in time.

Restoration is one of our key words. It implies that we arc in the antique business. An elder friend of mine has a neat car under wraps. It is a 5-window, 1934 V8 Ford Roadster Coupe. He intends to restore it. I want to ride in it some day during one of our parades. But the church isn't a car or a piece of furniture.

What's my point? God never called us to restore anything. He did commission us to get the gospel to the whole world. But He never compelled any generation to duplicate the forms and rituals of a first century Jewish culture. And we make a big mistake when we try to do it. We make an even bigger mistake when we say we are first century Christians. That's impossible! If we are Christians, then we are 20th century Christians.

I'm not disparaging a unity movement that called for the uniting of Christians. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I hold no ill will toward our esteemed pioneers, such as Campbell and Stone, but a unity movement that produces 152 more sects (Dan Ander's estimate) doesn't appear too successful to me. Again I say, unity is in a Person, not a movement. Let us be simply Christians, nothing more and nothing less, in whatever century we find ourselves.—*Steven Clark Goad, 371N. Palm, Blythe, Ca. 92225.*

I appreciate the challenge you always give in getting one to think rather than parrot. I am looking forward to the last year, but hate to see the publication end.—*Bernie Crum, Flat River, Mo.*

I read the paper from cover to cover as soon as it comes in the mail. In fact my friends benefit because I share its contents with them. Thank you for having the courage to spread the good news of God's mercy. The disunity of the Christian community pains my heart. I pray that more and more Christian people take Christ's call for unity seriously.—*Frances Monroe, Dearborn Heights, Mi.*

Some of us who knew Jimmy Swaggert and have followed his worldwide ministry through the years are distraught over his latest fiasco. Jimmy needs help. His problem, as I see it, is that he has never been able to humble himself enough to seek help out-side himself. I knew him as a teenager down in Ferriday, La. where he grew up, and have marveled at his rise to become the leading TV evangelist in the world. It is tragic. I feel sorry for his family and the people working with him. Some authorities think sex addiction

is worse than alcohol and other drugs.—*Chaplain Talmadge McNabb, Brown Mills, New Jersey.*

We have had a lot of sorrow in the past six months. When I studied under R. H. Boll he often quoted a poem I committed to memory that has meant a lot to me.

I walked a mile with laughter,
She chatted all the way.
But I was none the wiser
For what she had to say.
I walked a mile with sorrow,
Yet ne'er a word said she.
But, Oh, the things I learned
When sorrow walked with me.

—Antoine Valdetero, Jennings, La.

I greatly enjoy reading your publication. It has been a major source of spiritual support for me over all these years. I suppose all good things do eventually come to an end. I pray God's richest blessings upon you and yours.—*Virginia Crawford, Melvin, Ky.*

Please find enclosed my subscription for the final year. Maybe it is time and for the best, but not because you are slipping. The last few paragraphs of the November issue on the OT relevance is among your best, or anyone else's. Hang in there for another year and see what good you can do.—*Giff Roux, Wood River, Illinois*

What a treasure of good reading you send us! We both read "Our Changing World" and "Readers' Exchange" first, which are sort of soup and salad courses. The rest of the paper is the meat. We hope we can meet you some day.—*Wanda and Gene Hatcher, Franklin, Tn.*

(Ouida and I often think of all the dear friends we have that we have never met and may never meet in this world. We can say of them as Peter said of another One that we have yet to meet—"whom having never seen you love" (1 Pet. 1:8). Our final year with you will surely be our very best, and who knows but what many of you will get to come visit us—just don't all come at the same time!—*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

Now that we will soon cease publication there is an increased interest in our back issues. Selected at random by us, we will, send you 15 of them for $5.00 postpaid, or if you select them they are 40 cents each post-paid, however many you order. Some go back 20 or more years. We also have bound volumes, seven in all, dating back to 1977, except for 1979-80, covering 12 years of the paper. $70 postpaid for all seven volumes. Or you can purchase them singly, such as 1989-90 bound volume, entitled *The Hope of the Believer*, for $15.00 postpaid.

The ACU Press in Abilene, Texas is to be commended for publishing some highly readable and resourceful stuff. A new title, *Sparks That Leap,* edited by Matt Morrison, professor of rhetoric and speech at Abilene Christian U., is the work of 13 writers, all professors at ACU. The editor explains the essays are intended to reflect "some of the ways Christ helps us in the search for wisdom and knowledge." Leonard Allen writes about Alexander Solzhenitsyn as an "Apprentice of Heaven" and James Nichols has a chapter on "Some Perspectives on Practical Biology." I like the way Nichols tells the reader he may disagree with some of the things he says but that is OK with him. This is a fine "think you" book, the kind we have had too few of in Churches of Christ. We will send you a copy for $12.00 postpaid.

Another new ACU title with a positive tone is *Common Sense Recovery,* by Terry Bell and Steve Joiner, ministers in Churches of Christ in Lubbock and Abilene. The book is about recovering from divorce and deals with such problems as rejection, anger, guilt, sexual intimacy, loneliness. While it does not deal with the old issue of divorce and remarriage as such, it does offer solace to the divorced and claims that God will accept one's "second best." One strength of the book is its message to the divorced on how to help their children recover. $9.95 postpaid.

We have called your attention to other ACU Press titles and again recommend them with enthusiasm. *The Cruciform Church* by Leonard Allen is now in its second edition and is available in paperback for only $12.95 postpaid. *Discovering Our Roots* by Allen and Hughes is also now in paperback and only $11.95 postpaid. *The Worldly Church*, a call for renewal of Churches of Christ, by Allen, Hughes, and Weed, is in its second edition and is $9.95 postpaid.

If you are interested in some of the more sensitive issues in the life of Alexander Campbell, such as his thoughts on home, children, women, slaves, even money—all very interesting—we recommend Edwin Groover's *The Well Ordered Home: Alexander Campbell and the Family* at $13.95 postpaid.

Steve Sandifer's *Deacons: Male and Female? A Study for Churches of Christ* is what it claims to be, a study for our churches on a neglected subject. After a resourceful and reasonable presentation he concludes that a congregation may have male deacons only, deacons male and female, or no deacons at all, depending on circumstances. You'll give him high marks. $12.50 post-paid.

There is continuous interest in the divorce and remarriage issue, an area in which our people have suffered much pain. Homer Hailey's *The Divorced and Remarried Who Would Come to God* is a liberating book in that he contends such ones can come to God on the same basis as anyone else. The book has special interest since the author is associated with those Churches of Christ that have taken an unyielding position on the question, and has consequently suffered their wrath. $5.50 postpaid.

For some reading beyond our own Movement we recommend a new title by Lesslie Newbigen, longtime ecumenical leader. *Truth To Tell* with the subtitle "The Gospel as Public Truth" contends that the gospel is objective, historical truth that calls for radical conversion. He rejects the subjectivism and skepticism of our society, insisting that there is ultimate truth revealed by God, that it can be believed and obeyed, and that its end is to change society. $7.95 postpaid.

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